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Encyclopedia Entry: Squat Lekythos, Oil Vase, Women at Their Toilette

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Encyclopedia Entry: Squat Lekythos, Oil Vase, Women at Their Toilette

Abstract

Greek, Attic, red-figure, c.430-420 BCE

Attributed to the Manner of the Eretria Painter by A. Lezzi-Hafter.

Provenance: Purchased by the Ackland on April 2, 1971, from Munzen und Medaillen.

Disciplines

Ancient History, Greek and Roman through Late Antiquity | Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque Art and Architecture | Byzantine and Modern Greek | Sculpture

Comments

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wrestler is in three-quarter view, while the others are in profile with profile eyes. The heads are square, with rounded chins and downward turning mouths. Toes are awkward and sometimes carelessly drawn. At each handle is a palmette ornament. The central frond of the palmettes flanking the handle projects beyond the circumscribing tendril.

Side B shows an athletic scene with similar nude, stocky youths. The central figure leans back with arms forward, preparing to do the long jump without weights. The youth at left, possibly his trainer, holds a staff, while the youth at right points toward the jumper's feet or the ground.

The Type B kylix is characteristic of the Codrus Painter, whose favorite subjects are athletes and deeds of heroes.³²⁰ The heavy bodies and three-quarter-view faces are typical of the Codrus Painter,³²¹ as are lines at the elbows and wrist, and two transverse lines in the ear.³²² In addition the palmette complexes can be compared with those on other vases by this group.³²³

The drawing style is generally fine and careful, though with some sloppy areas and mistakes, such as in the toes and tondo border, perhaps indicating the workshop rather than the Codrus Painter himself, who is usually careful with anatomy. The scenes are also relatively simple compared to those on many Codrus Painter kylikes. The square heads, weightiness of the figures, three-quarter views, profile eyes, loose anatomical lines, and connection with the Codrus Painter or his workshop support a date circa 430 BCE.

Scenes of life in the gymnasium and palaestra were especially popular in Attic red-figure. "Sports" such as wrestling and jumping were more than mere recreation; they were also an essential part of the education and military training of youths.³²⁴ The physical strength and stamina gained from such activities were essential in ancient warfare. Archery is not typically depicted in athletic scenes, though it was an important part of such training. The presence of the starting post, however, confirms that the setting is the palaestra and not a battle.³²⁵

ME

319. M. B. Moore, *The Athenian Agora 30: Attic Red-Figured and White-Ground Pottery* (Princeton, N.J.: American School of Classical Studies, 1997), 68–71.

320. See, e.g., London E 84, 94, 95, Moore, *Red-Figured and White-Ground*, 70; Richter, *Red-Figured, Metropolitan*, 179–180, no. 142, pl. 145; ARV² 1268–1275, nos. 19, 22, 31.

321. On the Codrus Painter, ARV² 1268–1275; Richter, *Attic Red-Figured Vases*, 135; J. Neils, in Shapiro, *Art, Myth, and Culture*, 150, no. 59.

322. Richter, *Red-Figured, Metropolitan*, 179–180.

323. See, e.g., Berlin 2537, 2538, ARV² 1268–1275, nos. 2 and 5.

324. E. Gardiner, *Athletics of the Ancient World*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Ares Press, 1980), 28.

325. An early cup by the Onesimos Painter/Panaitios shows athletes on the exterior and two archers on the interior, Caskey and Beazley, *Boston*, 27–28, no. 76.

140 SQUAT LEKYTHOS, OIL VASE, WOMEN AT THEIR TOILETTE

Greek, Attic, red-figure, c. 430–420 BCE

Attributed to the Manner of the Eretria Painter by A. Lezzi-Hafter.

Provenance: Purchased by the Ackland on April 2, 1971, from Münzen und Medaillen.

21.0 × 15.3 cm (8¼ × 6 in.)

The William A. Whitaker Foundation Art Fund, 71.8.1

Exhibition: "Classical Art from Carolina Collections"

(February 3–March 9, 1974, North Carolina Museum of Art; March 24–April 21, 1974, Columbia Museum of Art);

"Art, Myth, and Culture: Greek Vases from Southern Collections" (November 21, 1981–February 14, 1982, New Orleans Museum of Art); "Classical Subjects and Styles: The Abundant Tradition" (June 29–September 2, 1984); "A Tribute to Joseph Sloane" (November 13–14, 1998); "Journey into the Past: Ancient Mediterranean Art in Context" (January 26–March 23, 2003); "Ancient Mediterranean Art" (March 10, 2006–March 11, 2007)

Publication: R. F. Sutton Jr., "Athenian Red-Figure Lekythos by the Eretria Painter," *Ackland Notes* 8 (Chapel Hill: Ackland Art Museum, 1972); Mack, *Carolina Collections*, 22–23, no. 31; Shapiro, *Art, Myth, and Culture*, 128–131, no. 50; R. F. Sutton Jr., *The Interaction between Men and Women Portrayed on Attic Red-Figure Pottery* (diss., University of North Carolina, 1981), pls. 1, 2; AAM 1983, no. 7; A. Lezzi-Hafter, *Der Eretria-Maler: Werke und Weggefährten* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1988), 211, 218, 222, 224–225, 342, no. 232, pl. 158, figs. 71a, 79; G. Crane, *The Perseus Project*; Ferrari, *Figures of Speech*, 27, 28, 32, 57, figs. 11, 12

Complete; mended. Mottled glaze on lip, neck, and parts of body. Handle chipped. Squat lekythos with double torus foot, short, narrow neck, tall echinus lip, and single handle. Rightward-stopped maeander interrupted by checkerboard squares encircles the bottom of the body. There are two figural zones of equal height, separated by a thin reserved line; ornaments include a band of circumscribed palmettes, a tongue motif on shoulder, large palmette under handle.

The squat lekythos is a variety of the one-handled jug used for oil and perfumes.³²⁶ The squat body is broad at the base and lacks a well-defined shoulder. This shape gains popularity in the mid-fifth century BCE and remained popular into the fourth. Scenes of women are common on this vessel, reflecting its use by women.

Appropriate to the vase's function, its decoration is concerned with women beautifying themselves through the use of



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mirrors, perfume, and adornment.³²⁷ Seventeen female figures are represented, seven in the upper and ten in the lower zone, in a collective toilet scene. In the upper zone to right of the ornament, one woman in a chiton stands to right offering a laurel branch to a second, frontal woman in a peplos who, in turn, extends her right hand toward the first while holding a basket in her left hand. A third woman in a chiton moves right with hands extended toward a fourth woman who is seated to left in a klismos wearing a chiton and a himation, and holding a mirror. Between them an alabastron hangs in the field. A fifth companion to right moves toward the seated figure, wearing a peplos and holding a small chest. Farther to right, a sixth woman seated facing right in a klismos, wearing a chiton and a himation, extends both hands toward a seventh figure who holds a chest. Between them hangs a mirror.

In the lower zone beneath the ornament, one woman in a chiton and a himation sits to right on a *diphros* (a low stool) holding an alabastron. A second figure in a chiton moving right extends her right hand toward the seated figure and holds a *kalathos* (a wool basket) in her left. A scarf with cross pat-



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tern and fringe hangs to right. A third woman wearing a chiton stands to right holding a small chest toward a fourth woman seated facing left on a klismos, wearing a chiton and a himation and holding an oval object, possibly a vase. Standing to right, a fifth figure in a chiton holds a chest in her left hand and extends her right hand toward a sixth figure wearing a peplos who gestures back with her right hand and holds a mirror in her left hand. Seated farther to right, a seventh woman in a chiton and a himation sits on a klismos, holding a laurel branch. An eighth woman wearing a chiton and a himation stands facing her, and holds a small chest. A ninth woman in a chiton stands to right and extends a scarf toward a tenth woman in a peplos who moves to right holding a mirror.

Most of the women wear their hair tied up in a bun, typically held in place by a fillet that is variously tied and sometimes decorated. Objects hanging in the field—alabastra, mirrors, and a scarf with cross pattern and fringe—suggest an interior scene.

The chiton is the most common costume. This garment, with many small folds, does not fit the body tightly, but clings to some contours. Several figures are shown in the same poses. The

faces are generally similar and without expression; the shape of the eye is generally consistent—a slash for the eyebrow, a pointed oval for the eye, and a small dot for the pupil; and wrists are sometimes awkward.

Greek authors who mention the role of women in Greek society state that respectable women stay indoors most of the time in order to manage the household, oversee the slaves, and avoid encounters with men outside the house.³²⁸ In fact, portrayals of women in the women's quarters without men are common in the Classical period. Often, women are shown weaving and making clothing (see no. 133).³²⁹ Women also appear reading or playing music³³⁰ and at their toilette, as on the Ackland lekythos. The chairs would set off four of the women as of higher status, the rest would be their companions and slaves; the laurel branch suggests devotion to Apollo.

The Ackland lekythos has been attributed to the Manner of the Eretria Painter by A. Lezzi-Hafter.³³¹ The work of the Eretria Painter, mature around 430 BCE, is best represented by his cups, which include over half of the hundred or so pieces attributed to him.³³² Some of his finest work occurs on other shapes, such as a squat lekythos in Berlin circa 430–420 BCE.³³³ The Eretria Painter creates pretty images, with light figures and delicately rendered drapery and hairstyles.

The painter of the Ackland lekythos appears to be a follower of the Eretria Painter. The style and rendering are similar, but the execution is not of the same quality. A comparison with Berlin 2471 shows that the figures of the Berlin vase, attributed to

the Eretria Painter himself, adopt more varied poses with more fluid forms, and the hair has more detail. The Eretria Painter shows some faces in three-quarter view, while only the profile view occurs on the Ackland lekythos.

The calm mood and soft style of the Ackland lekythos exemplify one style typical in Athens circa 430–420 BCE, the period after construction of the Parthenon. Rendering of the figures finds close parallels with work by the Washing Painter (c. 420s BCE), who often painted scenes of women's quarters.³³⁴ His women are tall and slim with "smashed" facial features, long noses and small mouths. The figures on the Ackland vase are slim with small faces, their dresses suggestive of fine, soft fabrics.

RLM

326. G. Richter and M. Milne, *Shapes and Names of Athenian Vases* (New York: Plantin Press, 1973), 14–15. B. A. Sparkes and L. Talcott, *The Athenian Agora 12: Black and Plain Pottery of the 6th, 5th and 4th Centuries B.C.* (Princeton, N.J.: American School of Classical Studies, 1970), 153.

327. See Richter, *Furniture*, 33–37 (klismos), 38–43 (diphros).

328. See A. Shapiro, S. B. Pomeroy, and H. P. Foley, "Women in Classical Athens," in *Women in the Classical World: Image and Text*, ed. E. Fantham et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 103.

329. Cf. cup in Berlin, Staatliche Museen F2289, Douris, c. 470 BCE; ARV² 426, 435–95, 1653, 1701, CVA Berlin 2, pls. 80–81.

330. See, e.g., hydria, London, BM E190, c. 450 BCE ARV² 611.36; CVA British Museum 6, pl. 86.3.

331. Lezzi-Hafter, *Eretria-Maler*, 224–225.

332. Robertson, *Classical Athens*, 230.

333. Berlin 2471, ARV² 1247.1; Boardman, *Classical Period*, fig. 229.

334. See, e.g., Robertson, *Classical Athens*, 223–227.